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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
30 April 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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TOP SECRET

Page Denied

30 April 1965

HIGHLIGHTS

Polish Premier Cyrankiewicz has recently expressed the view that US tactics may eventually make Hanoi more receptive to the idea of talks. He believes negotiations of some kind for a "two Vietnams" solution might be possible next fall. Cyrankiewicz claimed Peiping wants neither negotiations nor a settlement, but that Soviet influence in Hanoi has been somewhat increased since Kosygin's visit. Two strikes by carrier-based aircraft on 30 April inflicted heavy damage on supply dumps in North Vietnam. Hanoi is adopting new measures to counterattacks on transportation routes leading to Laos and South Vietnam. Men and supplies continue to flow south despite US interdiction efforts.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Government forces participating in the combined amphibious-airborne assault operation in Kien Hoa Province have captured a large Viet Cong arms cache (Para. 1). ARVN's search-and-destroy operation in Vinh Long Province is continuing (Para. 2). A force of two government battalions has inflicted heavy personnel losses on two Viet Cong companies in Quang Nam Province; in a related engagement in the same province, the government forces drove an estimated enemy battalion out of entrenchments near Da Nang air base (Para. 3).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
During his visit to Saigon, former ambassador Lodge was told by Premier Quat that the government was trying to steer a cautious course but that Quat did not rule out a recurrence of religious conflict. Buddhist leader Tri Quang stressed to Lodge

50X1

[redacted]

his support for US policies, but felt further measures were needed to assure victory (Paras. 1-2). South Vietnamese officials claim to have uncovered an anti-American terrorist ring in Da Nang (Para. 3). [redacted]

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
Carrier-based aircraft flew two strikes on 30 April which inflicted heavy damage on an ammunition dump and a supply depot in North Vietnam. All aircraft were retrieved safely (Para. 1). Hanoi is establishing new staging points along two highways in an effort to counter air attacks against truck traffic to Laos and South Vietnam (Para. 2). [redacted]

[redacted]

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
Nothing significant to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Polish Premier Cyrankiewicz aired Warsaw's official views on the Vietnam situation [redacted]

[redacted]

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He said a purely military solution is impossible but US tactics may make Hanoi more receptive to talks of some kind. The time is not ripe now for negotiations leading toward a "two Vietnams" settlement but they might be possible in the fall. Peiping believes its interests are best served by continued hostilities and wants neither negotiations nor a settlement. Soviet influence in Hanoi was somewhat increased by Kosygin's visit but efforts by Moscow to obtain effective control are making only slow progress. Cyrankiewicz's views are probably similar to those of the Russians, but it is unlikely that he was speaking at Moscow's behest (Para. 1). Chinese Communist propaganda continues to take a threatening

30 April 1965

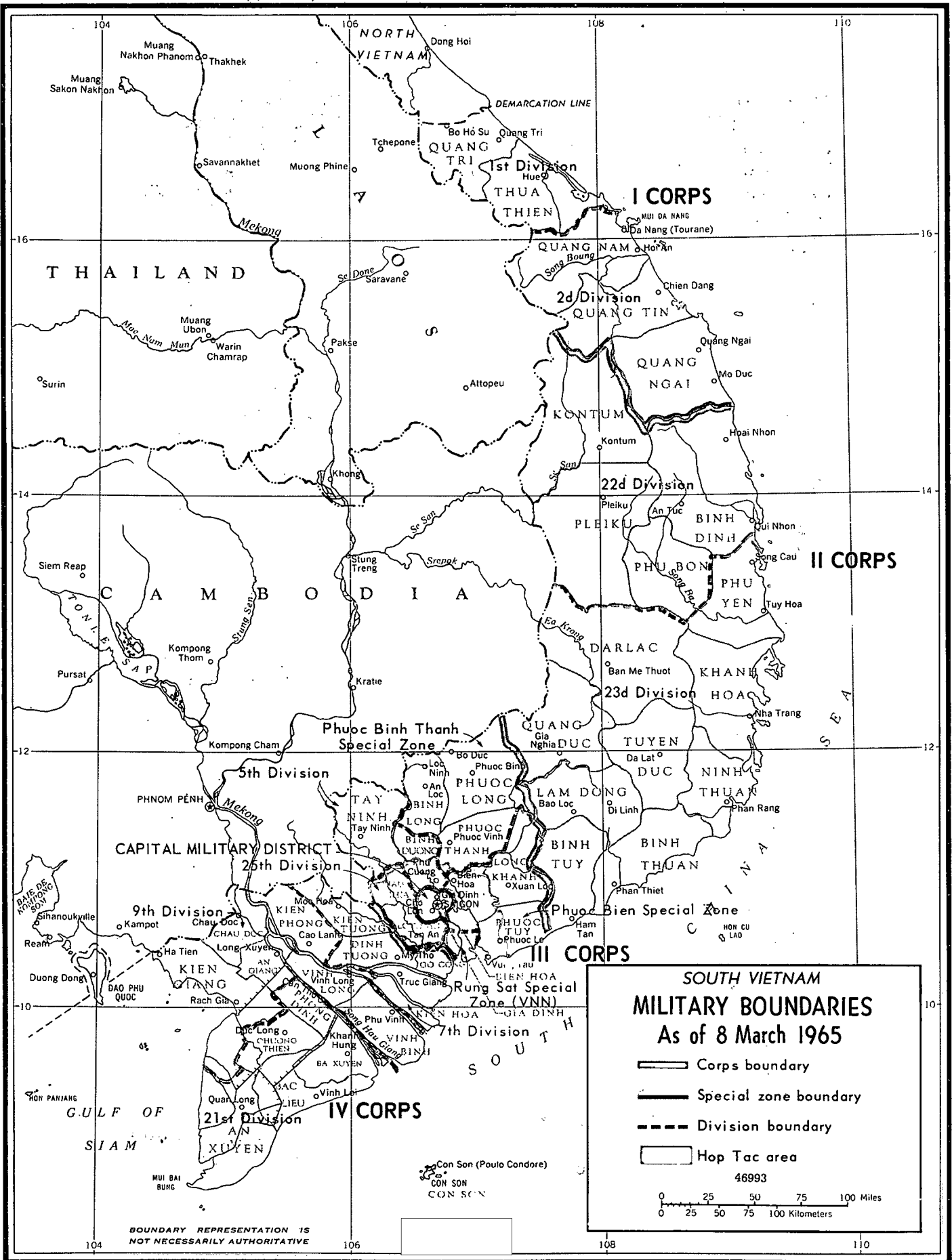
50X1

line concerning the dispatch of "volunteers" and to play up alleged domestic opposition in the US to involvement in Vietnam (Paras. 4 and 5). The Soviet-French communiqué issued on 29 April underscores Moscow's caution regarding a Cambodian conference (Para. 6).

30 April 1965

iii

50X1



50X1

I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Government forces participating in the combined amphibious-airborne assault operation against a suspected Viet Cong training and supply base in Kien Hoa Province, 50 miles south of Saigon, today uncovered a large guerrilla arms cache containing 240 rifles, 98 submachine guns, 21 machine guns, three 60-mm. mortars, one 81-mm. mortar, and two tons of ammunition and explosives. Confirmed enemy casualties in the action, which began on 28 April, are 86 killed and 34 captured. The latest unofficial reports list 120 Viet Cong killed and 41 captured. In addition, 20 weapons, including two light machine guns and a large quantity of documents were captured during the initial phase of the operation. Friendly losses to date are one killed and six wounded. The operation is continuing.

2. In nearby Vinh Long Province, the government's search-and-destroy operation against an estimated Viet Cong company-sized force is also continuing, with guerrilla losses thus far listed as 34 killed. South Vietnamese troops have suffered 18 killed and 51 wounded, and two American officers have been killed and a third wounded.

3. Forty-one Viet Cong have been killed and 26 captured as the result of an ARVN search-and-destroy operation, initiated in Quang Nam Province on 27 April against two main force Viet Cong companies. ARVN units sustained casualties of two killed and 11 wounded. In a follow-up operation, the force of more than 1,000 Vietnamese marines, Rangers, and militiamen reportedly assaulted guerrilla positions at An Trach, only eight miles from Da Nang air base, where they discovered extensive underground fortifications in which up to a battalion of Viet Cong were entrenched. A number of insurgents were driven out of their defenses by US jet air strikes, but only five were killed and two captured, along with a quantity of ammunition and documents.

30 April 1965

I-1

50X1

4. MACV's military report for 28 April shows 73 Communist-initiated incidents, three of which occurred during the reporting period. Guerrilla-directed 81-mm. mortar fire was placed on a district capital in Quang Nam Province. Viet Cong saboteurs mined an unescorted passenger train in Bien Hoa Province, derailing the engine and four freight cars. No personnel casualties were reported. In Darlac Province, the Viet Cong detained and harassed members of the Mekong River Study Committee. The Vietnamese members of the committee were later released, but four Japanese engineers and two interpreters were kidnaped.

5. The level of government ground operations of battalion size or larger remained unchanged. Twelve operations were initiated and 12 terminated, leaving 20 in progress on 28 April.

6. No information has been received from MACV on the number and results of small unit actions conducted on 28 April.

7. Overall VNAF activity continued to reflect a downward trend, while the level of USAF flight operations rose slightly, with air cover and close air support sorties responsible for the bulk of the increase. Pilot reports from combat air operations conducted against Viet Cong positions throughout South Vietnam on 28 April claim 90 guerrillas killed and 106 structures destroyed.

50X1

30 April 1965

I-2

50X1

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Two reports have been received summarizing conversations held by former ambassador Lodge during his visit to Saigon with Premier Quat and Buddhist leader Tri Quang. Quat told Lodge that his government was seeking a new political line independent of all pressure groups, but said that he felt there was still some danger that religious conflicts could recur, particularly since neither the Buddhist nor Catholic hierarchies could control all of their followers. He implied that he might face problems with both groups over his plans to settle the cases of some Catholics detained since Diem's overthrow while also purging some Diemist elements still in prominent positions.

2. Tri Quang indicated to Lodge his approval of stepped-up US measures to date, both against North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, but said two further steps were necessary. The first was to force the Viet Cong into negotiations and a cease-fire by increasing military pressure along present lines. The other was to confront the Viet Cong in the political sphere and to win over South Vietnam's people through more dynamic government action. Quang also indicated that he felt the US should confront Chinese Communist power now, and said Buddhism could play a role in forming an anti-Chinese bloc in Asia.

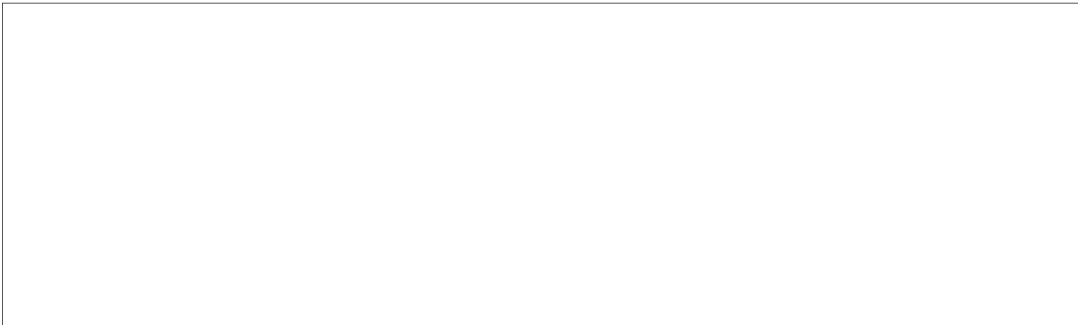
3. I Corps Commander General Thi and his deputy report that a Viet Cong terrorist ring has been uncovered in Da Nang, which includes a number of students. The ring reportedly had been ordered to foment anti-American demonstrations, to encourage assassinations of American and Vietnamese officials, and to break into the Da Nang air base. Security precautions reportedly have been taken among US forces.

50X1

30 April 1965

II-1

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50X1

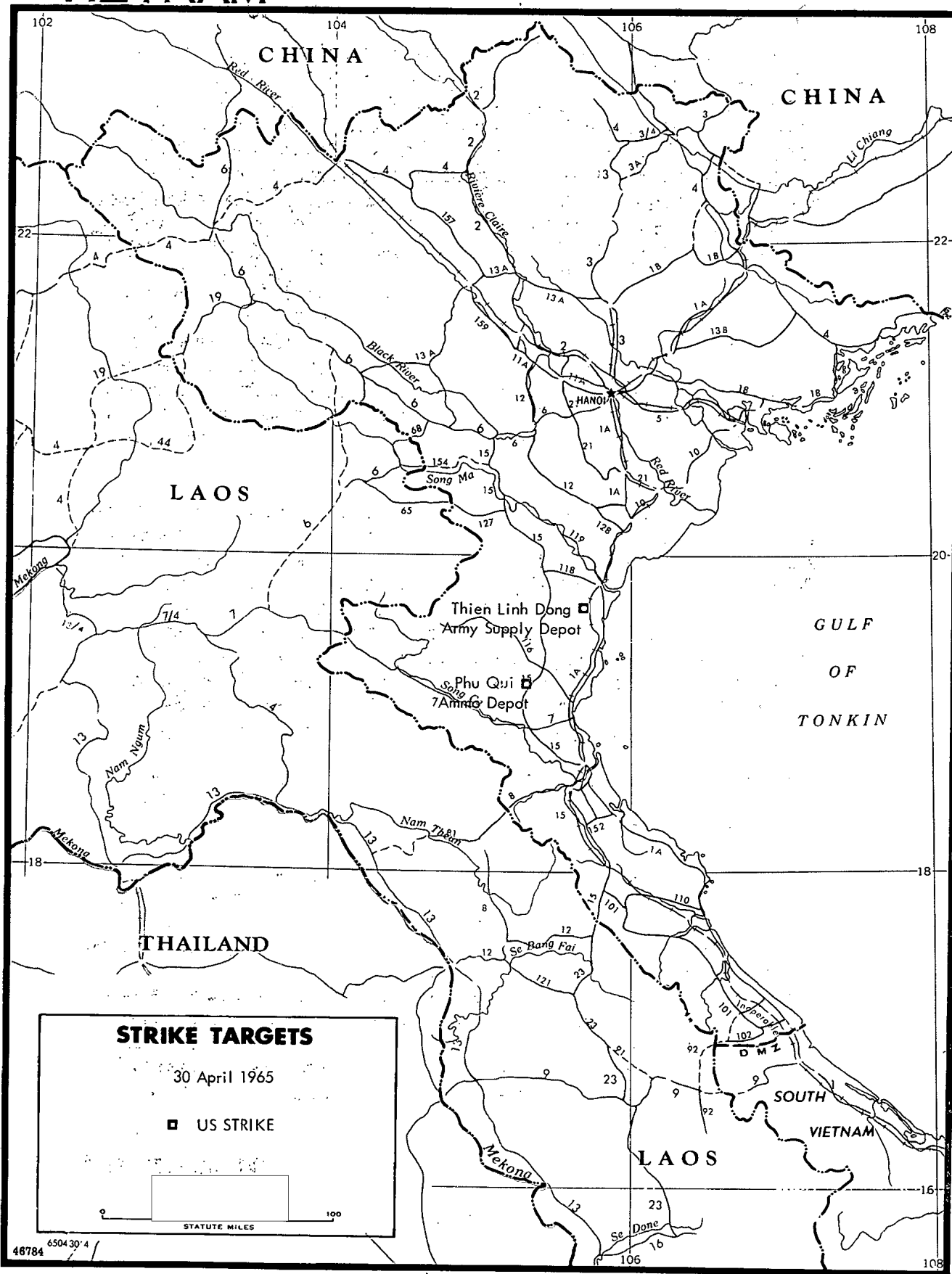
30 April 1965

II-2



50X1

NORTH VIETNAM



50X1

III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. US Navy carrier-based aircraft conducted two strikes on 30 April. The Phu Qui ammunition depot was attacked by some 50 aircraft in two waves. Pilots report that 28 of the 33 buildings in the complex were either damaged or destroyed. Another portion of the Phu Qui installation was previously attacked on 15 March. Thien Linh Dong supply depot just south of Than Hoa was also attacked by some 48 aircraft.

[redacted] and pilot reports indicate the installation was 85 percent destroyed. Major fires were still burning in the area. All aircraft returned safely. Other strikes scheduled for 30 April were cancelled or postponed because of adverse weather conditions.

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2. Hanoi is taking additional measures in an apparent attempt to counter the effects of recent air strikes on roads leading to central Laos and South Vietnam.

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3. Recent reports from roadwatch teams in Laos indicate that a large number of trucks have been getting their supplies through to Communist forces in southern Laos and the Viet Cong in South Vietnam despite destruction of bridges, regular armed reconnaissance missions, and repeated interdiction of the roads. In order to maintain the flow of men and supplies to the south the Communists are traveling at night, using more camouflage, building underwater bridges, and employing new staging areas.

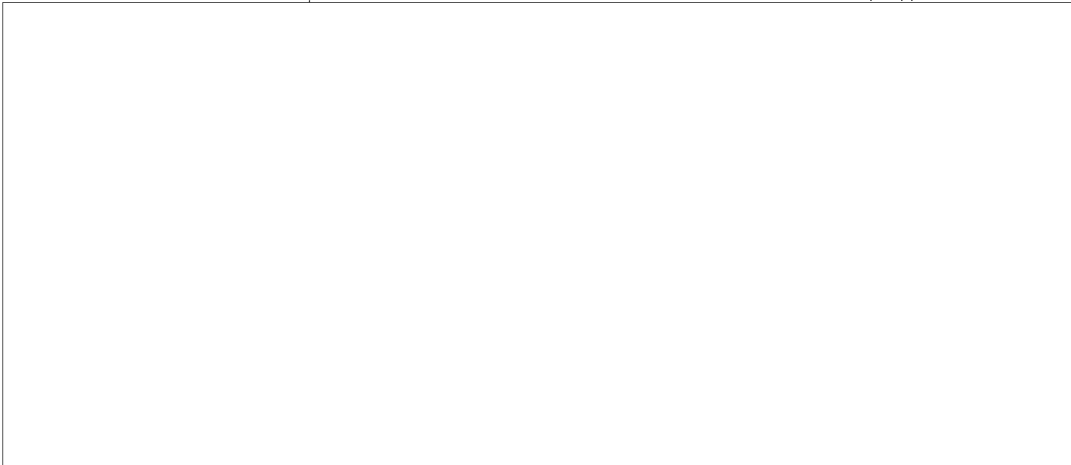
30 April 1965

III-1

50X1



50X1



30 April 1965

III-2



50X1

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

- 1. Nothing significant to report.**

30 April 1965

IV-1

50X1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Polish Premier Cyrankiewicz has aired what are apparently the official Polish views on Vietnam.

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50X1

According to this report, the Poles think that no purely military solution to the Vietnam problem is possible and that a settlement must be along the lines of the two Vietnams. The Poles would be willing to act as mediators to this end, but they do not feel that the situation will be ripe for such an initiative before perhaps this fall.

They recognize the US bombings of North Vietnam are a necessary measure to disprove the "paper tiger" theory and believe that these tactics will make Hanoi more interested in some form of negotiation. The Poles believe, however, that by the same token Soviet prestige is also on the line, and Moscow will have to meet the US air challenge. To this end, Soviet antiaircraft equipment and personnel will arrive in North Vietnam now that Chinese objections have been overcome.

Cyrankiewicz asserted that the US must realize that the Chinese do not want negotiations or any kind of settlement and believe their interests are best served by prolongation of hostilities.

Cyrankiewicz said Kosygin's trip was successful in improving bilateral relations between Moscow and Hanoi but noted that Soviet efforts to bring North Vietnam under effective control were making only slow progress. The Vietnamese, however, are not fully under Chinese influence, and there is a historical animosity between them which the Soviets hope to exploit.

30 April 1965

V-1

50X1

The Poles see an apparent "community of interest" between the US and East Europe in preventing the escalation of hostilities in Vietnam, preventing a strengthening of the Chinese position, and preventing the rise of Vietnam-associated tensions elsewhere.

The Polish premier's reported views, in sharp contrast to vituperative official propaganda, are probably similar to those of Moscow, although it is unlikely that he was speaking at Soviet behest. His remarks mirror Polish concern that the Vietnam situation could lead to a war which would involve East European states in at least a supporting role.

50X1

3. The People's Revolutionary Party--the South Vietnamese wing of the Vietnam Communist party--used the occasion of Lenin's birthday anniversary to discuss its plans for a future government. The discussion, broadcast over the Liberation Front Radio on 25 April, described the party's objective as the creation of a "people's democratic government with the participation of four revolutionary classes (workers, peasants, petty, and national bourgeoisie) under our party's leadership." The need to continue the armed revolution was also emphasized in the discussion. The party admitted that it was not feasible to rely on coup d'etats to create a "genuinely revolutionary government" or a "worker-peasant alliance led by the working class."

This is the first time the South Vietnamese Communists have publicly admitted that they, not the catch-all Liberation Front, will actually play the leading role in a future coalition government.

30 April 1965

V-2

50X1

4. The summary of a 1 May People's Daily editorial restates Peiping's previous conditional offer to send men to Vietnam in language which appears designed to convey the idea that the dispatch of "volunteers" is a foregone conclusion. Repeating previous pledges that China is determined to "spare no efforts" in aiding the Vietnamese, it stated that China will support the Vietnamese "people" with whatever else they need "until our men are dispatched to fight" with the Vietnamese to drive out the US.

5. The Chinese also continued to play up alleged US domestic opposition to the American involvement in Vietnam. NCNA claimed on 29 April that more than 4,500 prominent Americans sent a joint declaration to the White House stating their refusal to cooperate with the US Government on the Vietnam issue. An NCNA commentator asserted on 29 April that fear and opposition to the war was spreading among American troops in Vietnam.

6. The 29 April joint Soviet-French communiqué, issued at the conclusion of Foreign Minister Gromyko's talks in Paris, underscored Moscow's cautious stand regarding a Cambodian conference. Without making any commitment for future action, the communiqué simply took note of the recent US and UK agreement to hold a Cambodian conference, and noted that Moscow and Paris had earlier advocated such a conference. The USSR as yet has made no formal reply to the UK on the question of a co-chairmen invitation to a Cambodian conference. The Soviets and French agreed that the only way to solve the problems of Indochina was by returning to the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements, which specified "the impermissibility of foreign interference" in the domestic affairs of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

30 April 1965

V-3

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